

647

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

The "Adopt- A- Journalist" project is a highly innovative, interactive approach to the teaching of high school journalism, drawing on the technological advances on the Internet. This program involves journalism students, grades 10-12, and allows them the opportunity to develop unique relationships with a major New Jersey newspaper, *The Record*, and myriad International newspapers that are on-line. The program calls for each student enrolled in the course to "adopt" a staff writer/political cartoonist from *The Record*. The student is also required to adopt an International journalist or newspaper which publishes in a foreign language and/or in English. The student-journalist is actively involved in making the initial contact; the students e-mails his/her journalist a definitive letter which outlines the program and petitions the journalist's participation. After the e-mail has been answered and the participation requested has been obtained, each student then goes on-line every day for three months to begin developing his/her portfolio which contains the articles written by the journalist from *The Record* and the International newspaper (for example, *The Montreal Gazette*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Le Monde*, to name a few), the e-mail correspondence, the letters written to the students by the journalists, and the individual or class interviews with the journalist whom the student invites to the school. Also included in the portfolio are the ten or more articles or political cartoons with a summary, a comparison/contrast with previous articles/political cartoons written by the same journalist, and an analysis of the 5W's and 1 H in the stories/political cartoons. For the International Journalist component, the student prints out a minimum of five articles and develops questions which are e-mailed to the International journalist who also responds by e-mail. Some of the students opt to adopt newspapers written in Spanish, in French, and in Swedish and are translating the articles with the assistance of the foreign language teachers. At the conclusion of the project, each student demonstrates achievement through an exhibition, role-playing, before students, administrators, the journalists themselves, and parents. A mock press conference is held, and the student speaks in the voice of his/her adopted journalist.

High student achievement is promoted because the "Adopt- A- Journalist" project provides choice, individualizes learning, and broadens the student's view of journalism when pursuing collaborative relationships with his/her adoptees, highly qualified professionals in the field.

The "Adopt- A- Journalist" project is eminently replicable. The program can be used in English classes, social studies, and foreign language classes. Schools can easily establish relationships with their own local newspapers and any newspaper from around the world on the Internet. The underlying concept has applicability in other career fields, such as computers, science, medicine, law, and teaching.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* addressed by the practice and how the practice addresses the standard/s.

The "Adopt- A- Journalist" project addresses several student needs: application of communication skills through writing, reading, and speaking, quest for learning through a collaborative relationship with professionals in the field of journalism in and outside the classroom, commitment by trained professional experts to share their career experiences in order to educate students who will be in the workforce, and an authentic assessment.

*Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* addressed by the practice:

- *1.3- Identify career interests, abilities, and skills.*  
Access technology-based communication and information systems. With the Internet, students locate late-breaking news and go into the website for The Record to read the latest issue of the paper and to retrieve articles from the archives. Students use search students instantaneously communicate with their journalists and editors of the International newspapers.
- Students develop develop close relationships with their local adopted journalists who visit the classes, ( their "press conferences" are video taped and photographed) invite the students to shadow them while covering court cases or to attend press conferences at, for example, Yankee Stadium, and, in some cases, write their own articles about specific issues the high school students have written about in their high school papers. For example, when a student wrote about the drinking water in the high school, the reporter from *The Record* wrote about the story, citing the student's article in the high school newspaper. As a result of this article, the water pipe was fixed. " The Adopt A Journalist" allows mentor relationships to evolve; the journalists assist in arranging internships, give valuable tips to improve writing skills, and offer advice regarding colleges, courses, and career opportunities.
- *2.1 Select appropriate tools and technology for specific activities.*  
Students choose the technology required in order to help them achieve their goals and produce the final product, the portfolio. The computer, fax machine, and telephone are invaluable tools which are utilized to get the information they need which aids their learning process.
- *2.5 Access technology-based communication and information systems.*  
Students expand their use of technology which results in reliance on the Internet for their e-mail, their access to articles and the electronic journalism site, "Insite," an on-line high school newspaper where students have their articles seen by people from all over the world. An article about a student's mentoring relationship was on this web site.

647

- 3.3-18 *Write for real audiences and purposes, such as job applications, business letters, college applications, and memoranda.*

The business letters the students write, informing the journalists of the program and requesting their participation, at the local and international levels, encompasses the techniques used in this form of writing. These letters are e-mailed and faxed to the journalists.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

The "Adopt- A- Journalist" project's objectives are met through the assessment of the final product, the portfolio. Demonstrable evidence is shown through the written skills and technological expertise. Students are challenged to read critically, write creatively on print and on-line, and work independently and in groups. It fosters computer skill development in the areas of word processing, e-mail, graphics, and other applications, such as bookmarking. The project allows the students to apply classroom learning in "real life" situations. It introduces them to the requirements of a specific career, journalism, and exposes them to a "backstage" view of how a newspaper functions. With the Internet, students can read about events happening all over the world and can obtain a European or Asian perspective of events happening in the United States. The almost instantaneous communication with the journalists is available with e-mail. Students build self-confidence by developing collaborative relationships with adult role models.

The "Adopt- A- Journalist" project places the burden of learning on the students themselves. They choose the journalists, e-mail the letters, make the interview appointments, develop the portfolios, and share with other students in the form of role-playing. The portfolios, which are submitted for a mid-term grade, represent a bona fide authentic assessment instrument. In addition to the portfolios, students write essays about their adopted journalists. In these essays, the students discuss the particular subjects or beats the journalists cover. Students learn to integrate supporting details and quotations to buttress their evaluations. In the final part of the essay, students write about what they have learned from the experience. The end result of the project is that students become better communicators, better researchers, and better thinkers as evidenced by careful teacher evaluations of their portfolios. They have opportunities to form collaborative relationships with professional journalists who assume mentor roles. The International Journalist/Newspaper component on the Internet allows the students to go far beyond the four walls of the classroom, literally, to the other side of the world.